

a first valve mechanism incorporated in the valve housing for selectively connecting and disconnecting the first passage with the second passage in accordance with an external instruction; and

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a second valve mechanism incorporated in the valve housing for selectively connecting and disconnecting the first passage with the third passage in accordance with the difference between the pressure in the first passage and the pressure in the second passage when the first valve mechanism is closed.

REMARKS

The foregoing amendments and these remarks are in response to the Office Action dated December 18, 2000. At the time of the Office Action, claims 1-3 and 8-12 were pending, and claims 4-7 and 13-16 were withdrawn from consideration. Claims 1-3 and 11-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), and claims 8-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).

Prior to turning to the rejections on art, a brief review of Applicant's invention is appropriate. Applicant's invention relates to a switch valve which includes a single valve housing. The valve housing has a first passage to permit a fluid to flow into the valve housing, and second and third passages to permit, at selected times, the fluid in the first passage to exit the valve housing. A first valve mechanism is incorporated in the valve housing for selectively connecting and disconnecting the first passage with the second passage in accordance with an external instruction. A second valve mechanism is also incorporated in the valve housing for selectively connecting and disconnecting the first passage with the third passage in accordance with the difference between the pressure in the first passage and the pressure in the second passage when the first valve mechanism is closed.

As described in the specification, where the switch valve of the invention is used in an automotive air conditioner refrigerant circuit, the switch valve can be